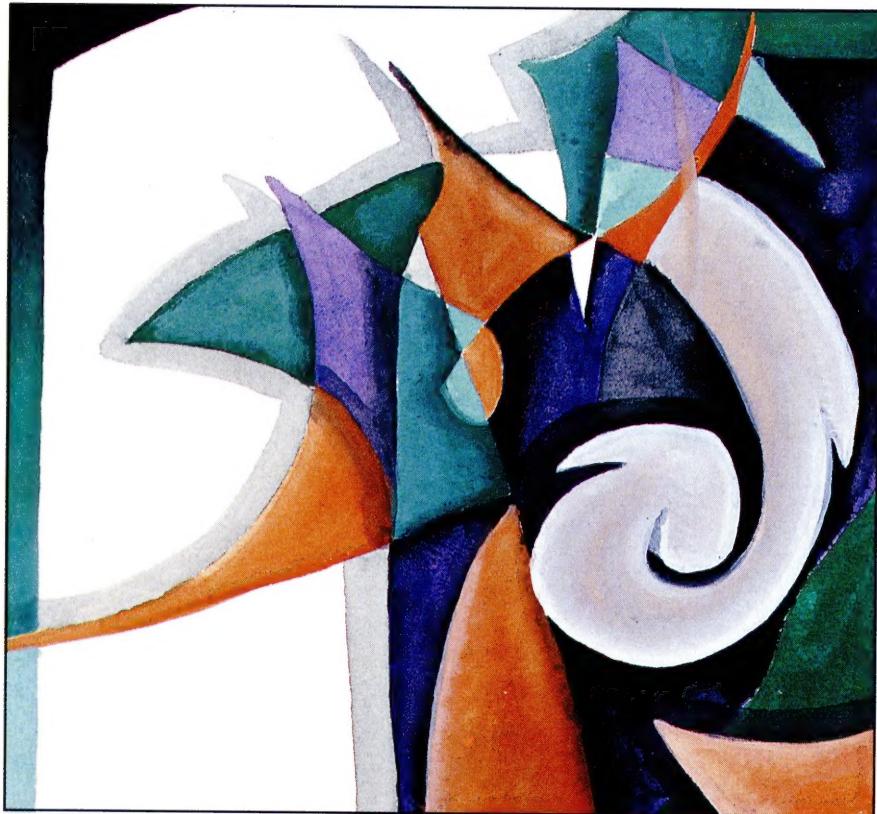


THE AUBURN CIRCLE



Volume 21

Winter 1995

Issue 1

THE AUBURN CIRCLE

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The Auburn Circle, financed by advertising and student activity fees, serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. It aims to appeal to a diverse audience by providing a variety of short stories, poetry, art, and photography. *The Auburn Circle* is published three times a year - fall, winter, and spring - with an average distribution of 4,000 copies. The views expressed throughout the issue are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Auburn University Board of Student Communications, those companies advertising in *The Auburn Circle*, the editors and staff, Auburn University, Auburn's administration and Board of Trustees, or an iguana named Lucille.

SUBMISSIONS:

The Auburn Circle accepts works from students, staff and alumni of Auburn University. Prose, poetry, essays and articles should be typed or legibly hand-written. *The Auburn Circle* has access to IBM and Macintosh computers. All artwork submitted remains in *The Auburn Circle* offices and is photographed to reduce risk of damage. We accomodate artwork of any size and shape. Slide submissions are accepted. Collections of related works by artists or photographers are accepted for our Gallery section. All submissions become property of *The Auburn Circle* on a one-time printing basis, with reserved rights for possible reprinting of material at a later date.

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COLOPHON

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**The cover is a watercolor by
Torrence "Lautrec" Webster.**



EDITOR'S NOTE

Working as a staff writer for **The Plainsman** last quarter, I learned a lot about meeting deadlines (which are necessarily stricter there than at **The Circle**), and I also learned how to slant questions to get a certain reply in an interview — the favorite trick of the satanic liberal media. One week I learned another lesson as well.

When a column I wrote about society's pressures on women to validate themselves through their looks hit the campus one Thursday, I found I had inadvertently prodded the dark pudgy underbelly of Auburn University — its mindlessly conservative collective unconscious. Since I prepare each issue of **The Circle** in an atmosphere of tension, feeling sure that my computer is actually an Orwellian two-way screen through which the SGA and the Comm Board are watching, I was already familiar with Auburn's reflexive anti-intellectualism.

Although I had expected the column to get both favorable and unfavorable reactions, I was unprepared for the personal slant those unfavorable reactions took. I escaped serious insult — an acquaintance told me half-jokingly that people like me were “what was wrong with this society” — but others who supported my views did not.

The day after the column appeared in the paper, a classmate told me it had been discussed on WEGL's “On The Air” the previous night. A girl had called in and objected vehemently to beauty pageants, which I had discussed in the column. Apparently she got a little carried away. The first question asked by the next caller, a male, was, “Was she a *lesbian*? ”

Apparently this caller failed his logic courses resoundingly, or he would know that one does **not** sup-

port an argument by attacking one's opponent. I have seen examples of this narrow-minded, defensive, reactive brand of “logic” before at Auburn — especially during the 1992 presidential election — but seldom has ignorance and pure reactionism been so blatantly demonstrated.

At a university, which Auburn was the last time I checked, an atmosphere of thought should prevail. The members of a university community should not only respect their own ideologies but also everyone else's, taking in all the facts pertaining to every decision or controversy and using them to form an intelligent, tolerant opinion.

Perhaps fearing that which is foreign to oneself is an inescapable human trait. However, one need not succumb to this fear. A few million years of evolution has endowed humans with the ability to reason, to override the terse commands of the gut with the second guesses of the higher mind. We must try to link the heart and the head, moving into a thoughtful, tolerant, and realistic view of the world. Evolution has also proven that animals eventually lose body parts of organs they don't use; an extra fin withers away, a spare toe becomes a dewclaw on a dog's back leg. Using the brain to deal with life defensively, rather than curiously, actively, and offensively, can only cause it to shrink to the status of the appendix, a nasty little organ that flares up once in a while.

Amy E. Weldon, Editor

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A SIMPLE Rebecca Massey

YOU WOULD DO

I can hear the radio twisting that tape
not as sweet as it used to be
warping us into shaky tones

so I'm pulling symbolism
out of the blue
But these words just clash
and won't fit
not calm and passive
like yours
like you

You tell me why I pity
a man with two hearts
wrapped around his little fingers
slipping in and out of the palm
of his hand

At least my ring is the gold
though
rusted and stuck
suffocating the skin underneath

Symbols falling from the sky
smack me in the face

one day, I happened to mention that
I have always been confused by life.
She whisked around, temporarily forgetting
the macaroni & cheese that she was stirring,
and, with a glint in her eye, said knowingly:
“you know why you’re confused,
right?”
- she meant that I had not yet accepted Jesus
Christ into my heart -
she is the most beautiful
fundamentalist that I have ever met.
She regularly inquires about my eating habits and
warns me about smoking too much and
gently urges me to go to church.
only 2 years older than I
she has been a very good mother to me.

THE SAME DEEP WATER AS YOU

Andrea Pfeil



BORN TOGETHER

Alan Paris

On a shore of our continent,
we have aged through cycles of tides.

Almost every year of your life,
you had gone to the ocean, so

you took me and introduced me
again as we walked on cool sand.

Small creatures were running from holes
in the beach. I asked, “What are those?”

You told me, “Those are crabs.” The moon
shone behind the dark clouds. I looked

down as you nearly stepped onto
a jellyfish, so i pulled you

away from it. We talked about
the foam of bubbles the surf

makes when it breaks.

In the morning
while you slept, the TV forecast

said the weather would rain all day,
but between showers we went out

to play in the splash of the waves
until the shadow of a storm

floated slowly to us. The air
was filled with thunder and strong wind.

The world was as water as life,
so our lungs breathed liquid again.

Twins inside the world’s womb, we must
be close enough to give us space

to grow — to be born together.
We can see this ocean is wide.

SIX FLAGS OVER JESUS

Bob McWhirter



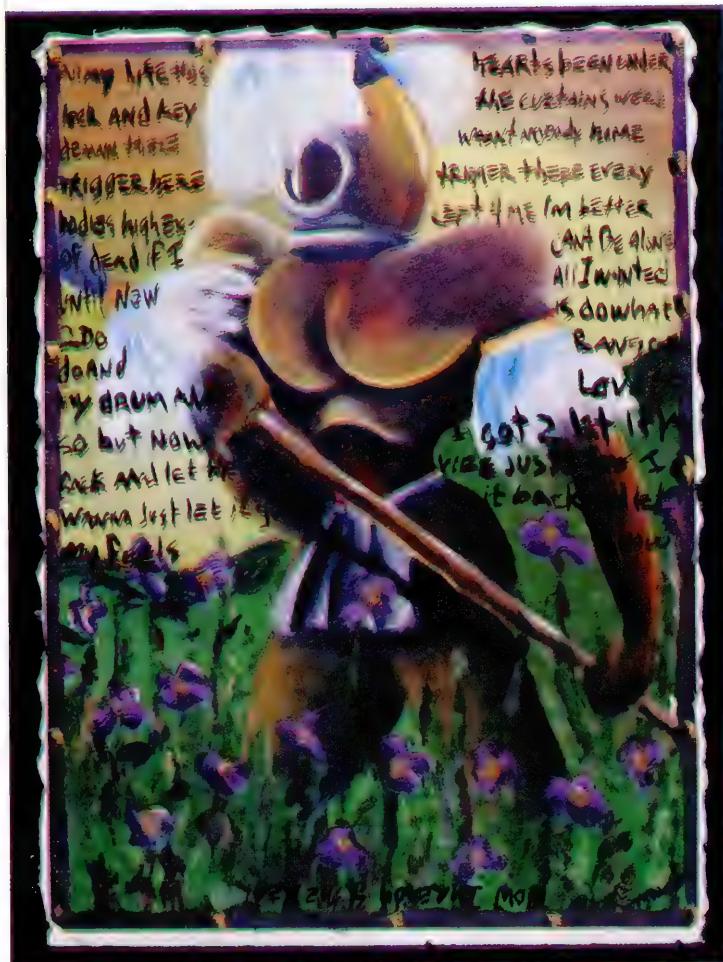
UNTITLED

Stephanie Beasley



LETITGO

Torrence Webster



REBIRTH
Patrick Cassady



I ONCE HEARD THAT ELVIS SHOT HIS TV

Alan Paris

The TV flickered
and glared at Lol.
He sat there — boring it.
The couch cushioned
his widening weight.

A show on the evolution
of nature came on:

first, the big bang;
then, from chaos, the cosmos;
dinosaurs and the death of dinosaurs
(the climate became too hot for them);

humans telling stories around a fire;
the civilization of the old world;
the conquest of the new one;
world wars to end all wars
(and the wars that came after them);

atomic weapons and their cold climate;
and finally television.

As Lol sat before the electron gun,
he could not feel its heat
nor could he expect what would set him off.

He sat there, civilized and
American,
mesmerized by the mantra
of the glowing box.

It hummed that he should go
buy a new doll
dressed in bright-coloured
clothes.

The images of her
kaleidoscoped
in his eyes.

The demand for action
pulled the trigger.
And then the explosion!

Glass shattered.
Electronic sparkled.

Lol is part of a myth
about a pop star
shining like the beaming
satellite in the sky.

He watches earth —
movement and motion
pictured on the widest screen.

UNTITLED

Anne Wynn





REVELATIONS

Jennifer Dickey

A friend of mine recently said to me that she felt people see things either vertically or horizontally. I can't really understand that concept but I do know that when my father thought that Elton John's song "Too Low for Zero" was about "true love for Vera," that people certainly see things, and evidently hear things, differently. I'm pretty sure he was serious but then again, this is the same man who deliberately tries to ruin my mother's favorite songs on trips to see my brother and his wife, who live in Jackson, Mississippi.

The latest song he's deliberately ruined was Roy Orbison's "It's Over," with my father singing "It's Rover" at the right place in the song...evidently trying to imply that the person in the song has left his wife for the family dog.

"Hugh, bestiality's nothing to joke about," my mother had told him. She reported this whole incident to me, her youngest son, over long distance the next day. She had then snatched the tape out of the player to drive in silence, as if this would torture my father.

He was hoping that she'd do this and replied, "Ah, yes, peace and quiet," leaning back in the passenger seat, flipping through a Prevention magazine. "**That** dog was certainly **that** man's best friend."

My mother, having the power that comes from being at the wheel, saw her chance for revenge when he began complaining half an hour later about having to go to the john. She passed two exits before she finally decided to pull over at a BP. "There,"

she said, pulling into the station over the rubber hose that announced their arrival, "we're even!" When he got back in the car she turned to him and said, "Not one word, Hugh. Not one," and had shoved her Orbison tape back in the player.

Since I live a good distance from home — they live in Oxford and I'm in a small town outside Atlanta — I hear about these excursions of theirs in their weekly phone call on Sunday nights. My mother often asks about Hannah, my neighbor. She met Hannah when I moved in last Friday and has been after me to ask her out ever since.

"She sounds as if she's from a good family, James," my mother said.

"She looks kinda kooky," my father added. "What's up with all these young kids looking like mimes? Why are they so white? I kept expecting her to start juggling, or slam herself into an imaginary wall..."

Hannah is the one who gave me that whole vertical/horizontal idea. If she's not suddenly appearing in my doorway with a piece of gauze taped firmly over one eye from dancing accidents (a month ago she had been practicing dancing in her living room and forgot she had a spoon in one hand), then she's always trying to put one over on me...like Bible jokes. She knows I don't get them, and I think that's part of the attraction. She was raised in a small Christian school in north Alabama where everything related back to historical Christian figures.

Even the math, she said, was religious.

"Religious math? I can't even deal with the regular kind." I thought about this. "David throws one rock at Goliath, how many would he have left if he started out with six? Was it like that?" I asked. She had shaken her head. She liked to call the shots when it came to religion and humor; I was in her territory.

Last week she came skipping in through the door, backpack on, hair in a long braid down her back, wearing one of those dresses that made women look like they were about four months along. She looked like a pregnant Laura Ingalls but I didn't say it out loud.

"Look, I'm Ezekiel...in and out." She danced in the doorway and ran outside and in again. She kept this up for a while, clutching the straps of her backpack with both hands, quoting the Bible verse that I knew was coming.

"SON OF MAN DID NOT THAT REBELLIOUS HOUSE OF ISRAEL ASK YOU WHAT YOU ARE DOING?" In and out. She'd get tired in a minute. She wasn't that athletic. Her little dance in and out the doorway made me think of that early eighties Cat Chow commercial.

"SAY TO THEM I AM A SIGN TO YOU..."

She was getting winded. "AS I HAVE SO IT WILL BE DONE TO..." she stopped suddenly. "THEM." She sat down and let her backpack slide down her back and off onto the floor. "Whew. Got any cigarettes?"

I tossed her one from my coat

pocket.

"What's wrong with you?" She saw the look I had on my face, one of impatience I suppose. She poked me in the left shoulder. "WHO OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD A SINGLE HOUR TO HIS LIFE? That one's in Luke." Pause. "Twelve."

After she left I began to question myself. What **was** wrong with me? I came to the unfortunate conclusion that I was lonely. I say unfortunate conclusion because for a while I thought I was enjoying solitude, but solitude, like someone once said, can turn into loneliness when you're not looking. I can tell that I'm lonely because I'm actually keeping up with my laundry—when I was insanely involved with someone and when I was in college I would be down to using my swimming trunks for underwear. I'm also starting to watch way too much television. But perhaps the biggest indicator that I'm in the middle of loneliness and not solitude, as I had hoped, is that I'm catching myself coming up with theories on love. **Boy, there's a sign.**

My latest, basic theory is that one can miss it, just by chance. Not that this is an original idea, but I came up with my own spin on it while driving through town the other day. It was nearing dusk and I saw a car coming in the opposite direction with its headlights off when suddenly it switched on its lights. That struck me as a strangely beautiful sight. A person so often saw cars with their lights on or off

but catching them in their “becoming light?” You don’t really see that very often. Or at least, I don’t. The same is true of posters tacked onto telephone poles. Normally you see them either on the pole or on the ground; it’s rare to see one actually be torn off by the wind, to be there at that exact moment to see it sail across the road.

So now I’m scared that I’ve simply missed that person that I should have seen, and I can’t help but wonder if I’ve missed her just by staying in the apartment watching t.v. and listening to Hannah go on and on about her problems and her questions on men. Because I’ve twenty-four, three years her senior, she feels that I’m the perfect guy to field her questions concerning the male psyche.

She was playing another silly game with Biblical references the other night and wouldn’t tell me what part of the Bible the obscure reference in question came from. I had asked, “What, is it the female’s job to tease? With just about anything?”

“Yup,” she had said, while trying to fix her braid, which was coming loose, “just as it’s the male’s job to guard his woman’s Port-O-Let at public events, his second job being to disappoint.”

“It’s the male who disappoints?” Ironic. She had left soon after and I sat at the kitchen table burning a candle I only brought out on certain nights. The candle smelled like vanilla and when I close my eyes I could see light jumping around. The candle had been given to me from someone I cared for a long time ago. I didn’t burn it too often. I had

realized that one day the candle wouldn’t even exist any longer, so I hoarded the times I allowed myself to enjoy it.

I had thought that the candle girl was the one for me when, lying in bed one night, listening to that Joni Mitchell song, “A Case of You”, the part where she sings, “Love is like touching souls”, she raised her foot up and touched the bottom of my foot with hers.

She had giggled and said, “So is love like touching soles?”

It’s almost Thanksgiving and my mother called to tell me that Uncle Walter, who divorced my aunt in a very messy manner seven years ago, called my parents up to wish them a happy holiday. Since most of us had heard from what we **thought** was a reliable source that Walter had died in Arizona three years ago, it scared the b’jeezus out of my mom.

“HEY, Brenda!” Uncle Walter had shouted over the phone. “What’s going on over there?”

Mom said she almost fainted. She had passed the phone to my father, who was standing nearby innocently eating an ice cream sandwich. She had then sat down in a chair and cried...she had been having a bad day anyhow.

“Sohow’s Hannah?” she asked toward the end of the conversation.

“The same chain-smoking Bible on two legs she always was.” I couldn’t walk very far from the phone on the wall; the cord was too short. I couldn’t get to the drink I had poured before she called.

“She smokes? Doesn’t she

know that the body is a temple?"
"Oh God, not you too, Mom."

I come home from my job at a video store to find Hannah standing in my kitchen. She's on the phone.

"Why are you in here?" I couldn't believe this.

She motions for me to be quiet and points at the phone. "Yes, I'll let him know. Bye."

She hangs up. "That was your mom."

"Oh **really**? What did she want?" It suddenly didn't matter to me why Hannah was in the apartment. I must have forgotten to lock it. All I knew was that I had just spent eight hours dealing with customers who, at the checkout desk, nudged their credit cards at me like dogs nudging their noses into your body, wanting to be petted. I was glad not to be alone for once. I noticed that because of the colder weather Hannah had stopped wearing her braid. She saw that I had noticed and patted her ears.

"They were getting cold." Her hair fell around her face like big commas pointing inward. "Your mom wanted to know when you were coming home for Thanksgiving, the day before or what...She'll call back later. I don't know why I didn't hand the phone to you...sorry." She smiled. "Oh, I almost forgot. She said to tell you that Uncle Walter was coming for Thanksgiving dinner since your aunt couldn't make it...that must be sad, waiting that long to try to get in touch with someone...he must have finally got his nerve up. If that had been me I would have..."

"Let yourself in?" I asked.
"Uh, yeah. Sorry. The door was unlocked and I heard the phone ringing...is it okay?"

"Yeah, it's okay." I nodded. I was tired and lay down on the couch. She kept talking. Her voice became background noise, a kind of comfortable static. It made me think of an article I had read that said something about listening to radio or television static if you were having trouble going to sleep.

It had been pretty dark in the apartment when I came in except for the kitchen light. I suddenly saw light jumping. Hannah had found my candle.

"LET THERE BE LIGHT!" She placed the candle in front of me on the coffee table.

"Wait," I wanted to say. But I didn't. Hannah looked very peaceful for once, with the light from the candle glowing. She didn't look as pale as she normally did, either.

"Wow, James," she said. "It smells like birthday."

"Yeah, it does." I shook my head. Could life be so blunt? "I am a sign to you..." I repeated that quote that Hannah had shouted to me a week before, when she danced in the doorway.

She looked at me. "I'm a sign to you...you actually remember that, huh?" She was quiet for a moment. Her voice became very soft. "So how do you see **signs**, James? Vertically or horizontally?"

"I don't think it matters anymore, just as long as I see them for what they are, don't you think?" We looked at each other.

BOOKMARKS

Amy Weldon

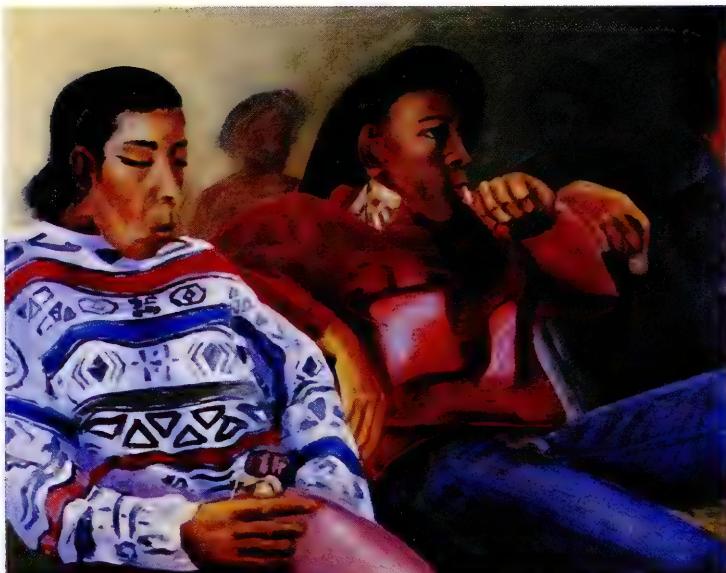
Baptists keep
their children's books
in basements. Every Sunday —
I was ten — they gave me
something new to read.
My knees were cramped
by low red tables,
small white chairs.

Above my head
the spines receded
stern and narrow,
bloodlust orange, calf-
gold yellows, Eden greens.
Goliath roared
from every cover, forehead
hollowed by a stone.

I kept my Bible School
bookmark. Off-
white cardboard, contact paper,
flowers faded out
of purple, veined
as crisp and dark as hands.

HONEY, SUGARCANE

Torrence Webster



KISS

Torrence Webster



OCTOBER

Amy Weldon

He slams the car door
quickly, runs away
without his coat. I follow
slowly, count the leaves
beneath my feet, the ashy crack
of every step.

He's skipping stones
across the lake. They bounce
like skiers past the dock,
the slimy rope that marks
the deep.

Last year he helped me paint
the swings. We slapped on
orange, spots of blue
to hide the rust, a rain of color
on the sand.

He's taking off now, six feet two
compressed to flight. He lets his fingers
brush the dirt; he arches backwards,
spins in circles, makes the trees
whirl upside down.

My own swing dangles, sodden,
weighted to the rut
below the seat. Too many people
were afraid. Too many feet
that wouldn't fly carved out this hole.

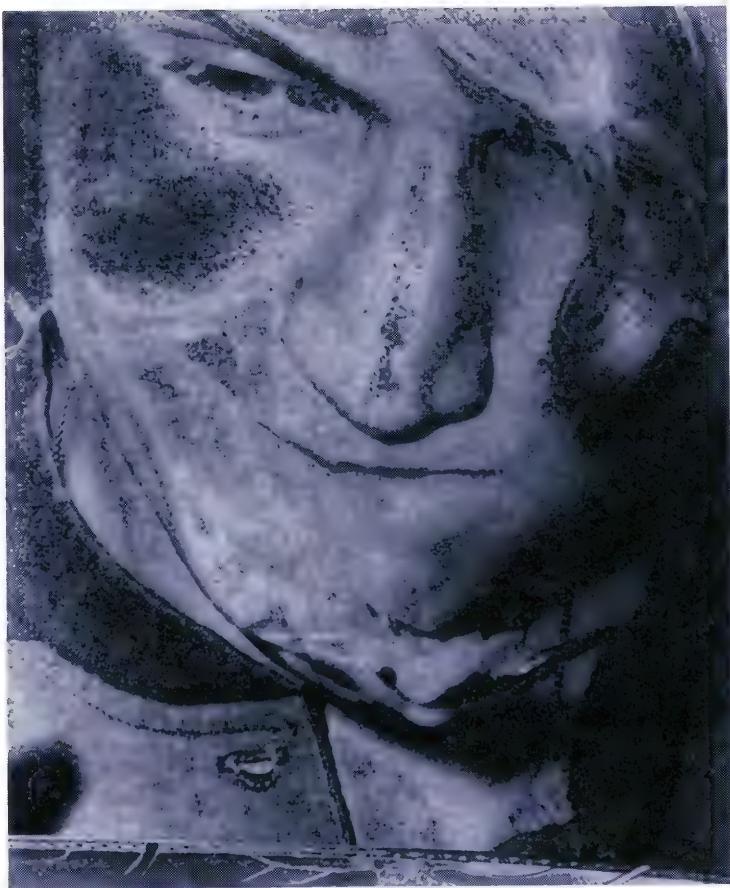
There's nothing left of him
but sneakers, cuffs of bluejeans,
twists of laughter in the air.
Two rusty chain prints
cut my palms; my fingers ache from holding on.

SOLARIZATION

Rebecca Massey



BOY WITH CEREAL
Zoe Press



THE LAST TEMPTATION OF ME

Matt Cleveland

Watergate Irangate Whitewater,
is not safe to drink.

Producer consumer mutual satisfaction.
But is it hard to use.

Bob, this product will make your life
a virtual reality heaven.

Wow and it's only 19.95,
now that's amazing.

It's the newest rage
and the hottest trend on the west coast
since 3000 B. C.

She/he died today.

She/he was a truly great person
and will live on in our memorex
or is it live.

New life was founded today in a fiber optic
cable outside Detroit.

Coming soon to a theater near you.

Rumored that it might be
even more valuable than
human life. Still going
up there on capitol hill
is the debate about aids,
does it really outshine the leading detergent.

It's the debate that keeps going and going
and going on to entertainment news now
sources are claiming that almost all
stars and famous personalities
are perfectly normal,
they're all insanely beautiful, all knowing, and all
powerful
and they get together once a year in
a mass orgy for us to report on.

While spending is up the dollar
is going down on american men and women.
Just what I need when I get that
not so fresh
feeling a little down? Try this pill
it's the strongest mind-altering drug
9 out of 10 doctors recommend without a prescription.
Makes you feel little, yellow, different. The devil
was set loose yesterday and was last seen devouring
portions of the midwest
are swamped in floods today.
Residents report they haven't felt
this helpless since the great tornado of
19 da da da left them without cable for 3 months.
In a surprise move today the president
returned power to the people.
Accompanying his statement
was a 4 billion page manual telling us
how to solve all our problems.
I just saw 10 million billboards
and even in strong winds
they could not be toppled from their #1
spot in the billboard pop charts.
Must be the newest technology
without which we could not continue
our tiny lives on this square planet.
Next technology obsolete already.
The kind of information that's really
important to us. Trivial Pursuit
is up next at eleven.
Well rounded higher education.
If you get higher you're not as cool as you think,

but if you get hired...
become a statistic of decreasing unemployment.
Information Superhighway,
more to know more to see more to process
faster think about it later.
Convert your name to binary
then join the bits and bytes exchange.

Can't come out to play tomorrow or today,
I have too many mass media events
to plug in to.
I'll just sit at home and drown
and masturbate to my Dan Rather, information overload
fantasies.
Then I will stop to think.

DON'T THINK
DON'T THINK
DON'T THINK

If you stop to think you might miss something,
you might miss something,

So just don't think.

hmm. Tempting.

ARCHITECTURE

Brian FitzSimmons



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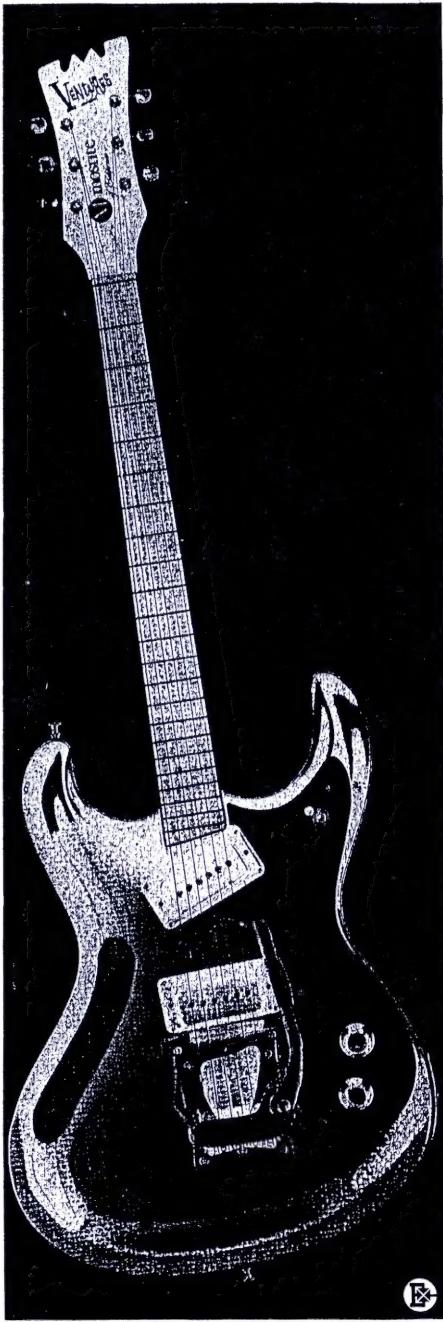
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CONTRIBUTORS

When asked for her contributor's sketch, **Rebecca Massey**, a freshman in English, modestly said, "I don't have any hobbies or anything." However, reliable sources have found several paintings, poems, sculptures, and other evidence of creative activity in her apartment.

Stephen Rozier is a freshman in English who enjoys coffee, coffee, and coffee. His gurus are William S. Burroughs and Charles Bukowski.

Alan Paris, an English major at Auburn, is the host of "Rhythmic Cycles" on WEGL. He notes that, in two consecutive issues of The Auburn Circle, he and Prof. Downes have mentioned dinosaurs in their poems.

Matt Cleveland is "no one special."

Amy Weldon, a junior majoring in English and journalism, is the editor of The Auburn Circle. She is quite possibly the world's only quail-hunting feminist, and is also making an informal study of Southern psychopathology.

Jennifer Dickey is a senior in English. She has no idea what's she's going to do after graduation. Her mother says, "At least you can type, Jen."

Anne Wynn took the photograph in this issue during a summer visit to Yellowstone.

Zoe Press is from Naples, Florida.

Brian FitzSimmons is the photo editor of The Auburn Plainsman and an industrial design major, which basically means that he is a glutton for punishment or has lost all attachment to reality. Some say the latter.

Andrea Pfeil is a freshman majoring in psychology from Decatur, Alabama. She prefers to remain mysterious, so she won't tell any more about herself.

Bob McWhirter has spent the last three years of his life studying the mating habits of weasels. So far, the only knowledge he has gleaned is that they don't like Twinkies, and to not get too close while they are in the act.

The artist formerly known as **Torrence**, a junior in illustration, is in the process of changing his name. Stay tuned and find out in the next issue—
?

Stephanie Beasley is a junior in architecture.

Patrick Cassady is a senior in art from St. Petersburg, Florida. He says that "Rebirth" expresses "my feelings about faith in God...The fainted egg symbolizes the old life, the egg on top of the purple mountain symbolizes a new birth in Christ, and purple is the color of royalty."

